

British Swat U.S. Exhibit on Bugging

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Commerce Department bowed to British indignation yesterday and promised to censor a proposed exhibit of "bugging devices" at the U.S. Trade Center in London next month.

The British do not like "bugs."

Archie M. Andrews, deputy director of the Bureau of International Commerce, said that nothing would be shown that the British Government considers offensive.

But until hackles were raised in London, Ben Jamil of New York City said he had planned to display 75 items from his eavesdropping and security device catalogue, all with Commerce Department blessings.

"Those guys have really gone to bat for me," Jamil said in

New York yesterday. The Commerce Department runs the Trade Center, hard by Piccadilly Circus, and puts on several shows a year there to promote U.S. products.

The May display will be devoted to "protective signalling and security devices."

Storm of Publicity

Advance publicity in the British press about the booth for Jamil's Continental Telephone Supply Co. stirred up a storm.

Featured in a current Esquire magazine article titled "Bugging the Bedroom," Jamil makes everything from burglar alarm systems to fountain pen microphones and longdistance telephone bugs.

In a television interview yesterday, British Postmaster General Anthony Wedgewood Benn called the devices "most

undesirable" and said he would not issue Jamil a demonstration license.

But Wedgewood Benn added that while British regulations prevent the use of "bugging devices," they do not forbid their being displayed or sold.

Jamil said he spoke with officials at Commerce later in the day and was told the show could still go on—so long as he didn't try to make any over-the-counter sales or live demonstrations.

No Proof Needed

"Our clients don't need any demonstrations," he said. "If they want one, we'll just tell 'em, 'Whatsa' matter, don't you believe us?'"

Of his wares, he said, "I don't think they're any more wrong than razor blades, guns and high-powered automobiles. It's the people who use them."

Still later in the day, Andrews said all items at the show would be pre-screened by the American Embassy in London and British officials.

"If they're objectionable, they won't be shown," he said, "at least not on our premises."

But just what will and won't be displayed may not be known until showtime. Jamil said his entire shipment was already en route.